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Vibrant, growing congregations changing lives and reshaping futures for Jesus Christ

The Methodist Hospital donates \$100,000 to Texas Annual Conference for Ike recovery



Ron Giroto, president and CEO of The Methodist Hospital System, recently presented a check for \$100,000 to Bishop Janice Riggle Huie of the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The funds will be used for the medical needs of people who have been devastated by natural disasters or catastrophic illness.

"We at The Methodist Hospital System care about the health and well-being of our neighbors in the community," said Giroto. "We hope that this gift can restore hope and health to people who most need it."

The \$100,000 will be used over a 5-year period, said Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Rick Goodrich. The dis-

aster recovery offices in Beaumont and the Houston-Galveston area will help identify those in need. The funds will then be disbursed through a grant committee.

Goodrich noted the state of healthcare in New Orleans post-Hurricane Katrina as a reference point. There were about five major hospitals before Katrina, he said, and on his last visit, the city was functioning with no more than two hospitals.

"Money is available for housing related things, but there are not a lot of options -- particularly in Galveston -- for health needs," Goodrich said. "You have UTMB that is down to 200 beds and Shriners' Hospital is closed -- healthcare on the Island is very slow to come back."

'We still have great needs to meet'

Progress and problems mark 6 months of Ike recovery

**By Eddie Hilliard
Director of the Houston-Galveston Disaster Recovery Center**

Six months!?! No it can't be! It seems only yesterday that Hurricane Ike, one of the most devastating storms in U.S. history roared onto the upper Texas Gulf coast.

I suppose I have a different perspective of the storm as I have been living it since the beginning. While this storm did not affect me physically, I have seen first hand the devastation it has caused to the people of Texas.

The United Methodist Church has long been involved in missions, outreach and disaster recovery. There are

exemplary organizations in Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana and East Texas as well as groups working with the tornado and flood victims in the Midwestern U.S.

So, it was no surprise when the Texas Annual Conference immediately began organized relief efforts and had trained employees and volunteers in place within two weeks after the storm.

What is difficult to put into the words is the state of the recovery effort six months later. There are amazing stories of Herculean efforts to rebuild and restore the area. The elderly lady who mucked out her own house and had the sheetrock and roofing materials delivered and ready for vol-

unteers to help her while she comforted her neighbors.

Moody Memorial First UMC opened their doors to congregations of other denominations who have lost their physical home but not their spiritual center. These congregations now share a sanctuary and doctrines seem less important than faith.

Have you heard about Galveston County Restore and Rebuild (GCRR) or the Greater Houston Restore and Rebuild Committee? These two and others elsewhere are faith based groups that have come together regardless of race, creed, color or religion and collaborated to help the victims of Ike. They don't discuss their differences; they ask

where they can find another dollar or another volunteer to aid those in need. Can you imagine a group representing 25 different faith stories at the same table with one goal?

On the other hand, six months later there are still people whose homes have not been cleaned out or, worse, they have no home. Many lost everything but the clothes on their back. There are 4,000 damaged, uninsured homes on Galveston Island that are owned by people without the resources to repair them. I'm talking about the ones without a voice. Those with very little income, the elderly, the disabled, the single parent are

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The mission of the Texas Annual Conference is to equip congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world to the glory of God.

Resident Bishop
Janice Riggle Huie

Director of Communications
Eleanor L. Colvin
ecolvin@txcumc.org

Editor
Thelma Jones
thelmaj@methodists.net

Web Content Manager
Brant Mills
bmills@txcumc.org

Communications Assistant
Rebecca Garcia
garciar@methodists.net

Cross Connection
5215 Main Street
Houston, Texas 77002
713-521-9383

Conference Web Site:
www.txcumc.org

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Staff members at Methodist Children's Home receive prestigious education award

By **Thelma Jones**
Editor, Cross Connection

George and Genevie Ratliff were the recipients of the, "Residential Educators of the Year" award given by the Coalition for Residential Education, a national child care agency. CORE, as it is known, is a national organization which promotes residential education programs for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Ratliffs are individuals who have demonstrated exemplary consistency in their service to youth for nearly three decades. Their consistency is evident in the way they run the strength-based program of care at Methodist Children's Home, in their personal behavior and in the way they treat youth. This is a significant award that honors their years of dedicated service and their passion for at-risk young people.

The couple bases their long-term success on their ability to establish and maintain positive, healthy relationships with youth. George Ratliff takes advantage of every opportunity to share his wisdom and insight

with his boys, whether it's visiting at the dinner table or during a van run across town. Residents know they can always approach the Ratliffs for help and advice, and they know they'll always receive sound advice – whether or not it's something they want to hear!

George and Genevie Ratliff have served as homeparents at Methodist Children's Home for 28 years. They have been married for more than 50 years. They have made significant contributions to their community through their commitment to their church and its music program. They understand the importance of introducing the youth at Methodist Children's Home to various activities in the community as well as contributing their time and talents in service to others.



Mr. and Mrs. George Ratliff proudly show off their award. The Residential Educators of the Year award is given annually by the Coalition for Residential Education, a national child care agency.

Methodist Children's Home

Methodist Children's Home provides services to more than 1,000 children and youth daily through residential care—at the Waco campus, the Boys Ranch near Axtell and a satellite campus in Waxahachie—as well as foster care and other services.

Outreach offices are located in San Antonio, Houston, Tyler, Dallas, Lubbock, Corpus Christi, El Paso and Albuquerque, N.M. For more information, visit www.methodistchildrenshome.org.

Carrie Anderson, Media Relations Office for the Methodist Children's Home contributed to this article.

Progress and problems mark 6 months of Ike recovery

Continued from page 1

people who so desperately need help, but often don't even know that help is available.

We've made great progress. I know of nearly 100 homes that have been

joy that gets overlooked.

But, overlooking the joy is easy when you know of the people with no place to turn. There were over 100,000 homes damaged in Houston

with life.

The week after the storm, Ike was headline news. But, with the announcement of a female vice presidential candidate and the first hints of the economic crisis, we quickly became old news. We've had to fight for time in the media to get the word out about the needs here. And the needs seem to grow rather than lessen.

Six months?! The lows and the rewards have been many. We have accomplished much. We've raised funds; we've seen volunteers pour into our area; we've seen groups come together with one purpose. But, we still encounter the deaf couple who we only dis-

covered two weeks ago. They had no idea where to turn for help. The elderly lady living with a friend because she has no where to go. The couple who barely got by on social security before the storm, and now each day is a struggle. The children – homeless – living with their parents in a van.

Please join us as we kick off our next six months. Lift your heart in prayer for those in need. Pray that we may find the resources to answer the call here. And if you are able, join us financially and physically as we look to a brighter future.

To donate or volunteer, visit www.txcumc.org and click the Hurricane Ike button.

There are 4,000 damaged, uninsured homes on Galveston Island that are owned by people without the resources to repair them.

repaired since the storm. That means 100 families can finally begin to rebuild their lives and put this dark period behind them – 100 families who can begin to live again. This is the

alone. There are almost 1 million FEMA claims as a result of this storm. We still have great needs to meet. Needs that have not lessened as the rest of the country has gone on



Water & Word -- a community gift

Easter celebration includes giving and receiving

By April Canik
Communications Director
St. Luke's UMC Houston

This spring, the concept of living water has new significance for all who are associated with St. Luke's United Methodist Church. As the Lenten season began, St. Luke's initiated an "H2O Challenge" to generate an Easter Offering designated to Living Water International's efforts to help the world's most vulnerable people get the clean water they need to live.

"St. Luke's is also focusing on providing living water in a spiritual sense," says Senior Pastor Tom Pace, "by providing all Easter guests with a free MP3 version of the New Testament on disk – an audio version for adults and a Bible story version for children."

Both initiatives will bring a unique dimension to Easter.

H2O for Lent

Unlike war and terrorism, the global water crisis does not make media headlines – despite the fact that it claims more lives through disease than any war claims through guns. Roughly 1 out of 8 across the globe do not have access to safe water.

In an effort to *make a difference* in the global water crisis, church members and friends have been joining the H2O Challenge by making water their only beverage for two weeks. Rather than buying sodas, coffee and sports drinks, the Challenge encourages all participants to contribute that money to help Living Water International drill water wells in desolate villages within Kenya.

When 16-year-old Berry Isensee learned that \$14 could provide three African families with clean water for a year, he donated \$43 from his part-time job to sponsor nine families. Others have participated in the "conversation" via St. Luke's online blog at

www.H2Ochallenge.org, and members such as Jerry Spetseris have been inspired to pursue related volunteer activities. "In my professional life, I have dealt with shallow water wells in the U.S. that were contaminated by gasoline constituents," Spetseris said. "Therefore, I am interested in

additional training so I can use my professional talents in a way that directly helps the disenfranchised by helping provide water in developing nations."

St. Luke's Outreach Executive

"Houstonians will literally be listening to the Bible at the same time people in a foreign village are hearing about God through this powerful and far reaching program."

By Maryl Barry
St. Luke's Senior Adult Coordinator

Susan Silvus added: "On multiple occasions, I have seen children and adults drinking out of disease-infested pools of stagnant surface water in Africa, so I consider it a privilege to be able to tangibly help Living Water International this Easter." Although contributions will continue through the month of April, St. Luke's had already raised more than \$15,000 by mid March. To enhance understanding of this global issue, Living Water International will set up a portable drilling rig at the Easter at the Park contemporary worship service hosted by St. Luke's at 10 a.m. at Discovery Green Park (www.easteratthepark.com).

MP3s for Easter

St. Luke's is joining approximately 1,000 Houston area churches in the Faith Comes By Hearing Audio Bible listening program that provides free audio New Testament CDs in MP3 format for adults and Kidz Bible CDs for children. St. Luke's selected the high-attendance Easter time frame to distribute the discs to all who attend worship on campus or at the outdoor Easter at the Park service at Discovery Green Park.

"We are so excited about the Faith Comes by Hearing program sponsored by Hosanna Ministries," says Senior Pastor Tom Pace. "We want to offer the opportunity to hear the story of Jesus and his church to as many people as possible."

For years, church leaders have

been joining this outreach program and challenging recipients to listen to daily tracks for 28 minutes a day. "In just 40 days, listeners will have heard the entire New Testament," says Adult Education

Director Jane Williams, "and they will be ready for Dr. Pace's corresponding insight each week during the Listen to the Story sermon series that begins after Easter."

You've Got the Time

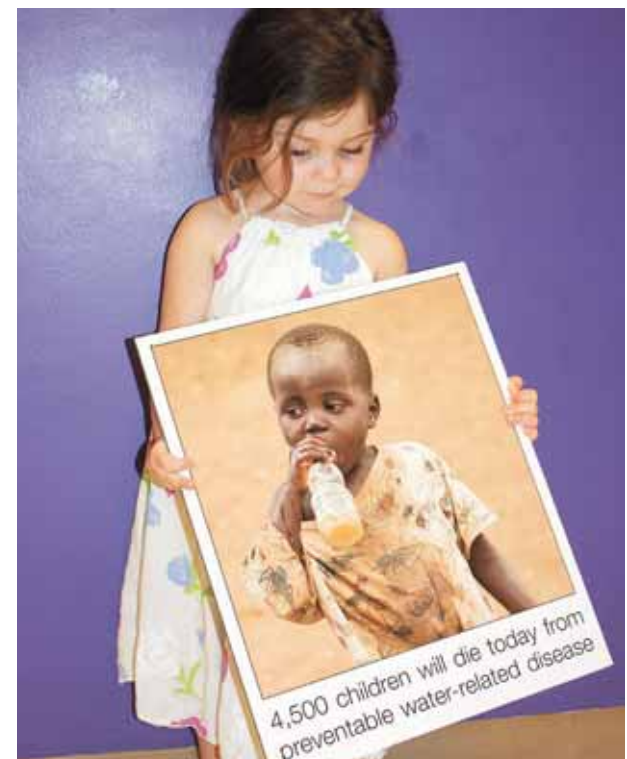
"Understanding Hosanna Ministries' mission to translate and distribute the Scriptures in all languages to all people throughout the world is amazing to think about," said St. Luke's Senior Adult Coordinator Marlys Barry. "Houstonians will literally be listening to the Bible at the same time people in a foreign village are hearing about God through this powerful and far reaching program."

Churches interested in joining this outreach effort and receiving free MP3 cds for their congregations can contact Hosanna's International Director Morgan Jackson at 1-800-545-6552.

Audio Bible recordings have been completed in 66 languages. More than 39,000 churches have participated to date, and contributed to the global translation and distribution program.

Inside and Outside

St. Luke's will hold Easter worship services at 3471 Westheimer at 8, 9, 10 and 11 a.m. and an Easter at the Park outdoor service at Discovery Green, (www.discoverygreen.com) at 10 a.m., followed by family fun time including an egg hunt featuring 12,000+ eggs and kid-friendly Easter crafts.



During the season of Lent St. Luke's UMC in Houston is focused on gifts of water and the Word. The church will distribute free copies of the Bible on CD and MP3 files at its Easter worship in Discovery Green Park. And, members were asked to drink only water during two weeks of Lent, and use the money they save to build clean water wells in Kenya.



Signs of love: Team of deaf students s



Homeowner Donny Gardner tells his Hurricane Ike survival story, through an interpreter, and thanks the United Methodist Church volunteers. At right, the son of team leader Rev. Tom Hudspeth of Lovers Lane UMC in Dallas, helps his new friend paint her home.



By Eleanor L. Colvin
Texas Annual Conference
Communications Director

When FEMA arrived to evaluate Donny Gardner's Hurricane Ike case one month after the storm, there was no interpreter present – although he had requested one. The communications barrier made a situation that was already bad – worse.

Gardner and his wife, who are both deaf, were happy to learn of services available through the Texas Annual Conference Disaster Recovery Office. They were even happier to welcome a team of 20 deaf and hard-of-hearing volunteers to their home two weeks later.

"He was surprised when we first arrived," said team leader Rev. Tom Hudspeth of Lovers Lane UMC in Dallas. "He met the two women with us from Oklahoma and was chatting with

them. We said, 'wait, we have more.'"

As the remainder of the 18 team members filed off the bus, each greeted Gardner. "Deaf? Deaf?" he asked, with growing surprise and joy. Only five team members can hear, while the vast majority of the volunteers are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

"We would've served anyone," said Hudspeth, "but it was an answer to a prayer to work with a deaf client."

'Profit sharing'

A bone graft in Gardner's back is a source of pain, but it didn't stop him from beginning the clean up process on his home back in September. Some family members helped him tack the roof. But when it rained, the water poured through again.

"I was really grateful for the church to help me," said Gardner, who lives in the home in which he was raised. "If I had to hire a construction company, I'd pay more than \$20,000, because they

would be making a profit."

Instead, the UMCOR partnership with the TAC is underwriting the \$15,000 in materials and repair costs. And, the church, believes in "profit sharing." James Lee, 17, is among the team members who shared in the joy of serving others. Lee said he came on the Spring Break mission trip to help other people.

"I came on the trip because I wanted to help other people – God called me to help other people," Lee said through an interpreter. Serving someone who is deaf was an added blessing for him as well. "It's easy to understand. It's easy to communicate."

When asked what he'd say to encourage others who doubt their skills – whether communication or technical – Lee responded: "I'd say, you can come help. Don't be afraid of anything. You can do it – God's with you."

That's the attitude that Peggy Key, executive director of the Lovers Lane

Academy for the Deaf, hopes her students will have. "They're deaf? So what," she said. "That means they can't hear. That doesn't mean they can't get up and do anything else."

The mission trips also expose the Academy for the Deaf students to diverse experiences and someone to help explain them, which is a different experience from when they with their hearing parents.

Additionally, the students are learning team work, problem solving and more through mission, said Key: "We're teaching them to serve other people. They're finding lots of things they can do, that maybe they thought they couldn't do before."

To learn more about Hurricane Ike volunteer opportunities, go to www.txcumc.org and click the Hurricane Ike button, or contact Volunteer Coordinator Verronda Flanagan at vflanagan@txcumc.org or 832-895-6035.



peaks universal language of service



Above: Two team members paint the exterior of a Hurricane Ike damaged home in Santa Fe.

Above Left: Nailing down a brand new roof is Peggy Key, Executive Director of Lovers Lane Academy for the Deaf. Project manager Sam Landry of the Louisiana Annual Conference offers guidance.

Left: During their hard-earned break, a teen volunteer blesses the meal in Sign Language.



Register now for EXPLORATION 2009



EXPLORATION 2009, scheduled for Nov. 13-15 in Dallas, Texas, addresses The United Methodist Church's need for young clergy by offering youth and young adults who feel God's call a chance to explore that call.

"Today more than ever, the denomination needs to sponsor events that invite, train, and support young people as they answer their call to ordained ministry," said the Rev. Meg Lassiat, director of Student Ministries, Vocation, and Enlistment at the General Board of Higher Education and

fall, The Lewis Center for Church Leadership released the 2008 Clergy Age Trends Report that shows for the first time this century the percentage of young elders has risen to greater than 5 percent. The report said the percentage of young adult elders was 5.21 percent and the percentage of young adult deacons had risen to 7.69 percent," Lassiat said.

"These statistics show a positive trend since this data was first reported in 2005, and the increase helps to demonstrate the importance of events and ministries that encourage

considering a call to ordained ministry as a deacon or elder in The United Methodist Church.

"By attending EXPLORATION, youth and young adults will have the opportunity to explore a variety of ways to serve in ordained ministry," Lassiat said.

She added that efforts are being made to communicate regularly with annual conferences so clergy and other leaders will have the opportunity to support their young people and encourage them in their discernment for ministry.

Rev. Tyrone Gordon, Dr. William B. Lawrence, Bishop Sally Dyck, and the Rev. Motoe Yamada will be the keynote speakers for the event. Participants will also have the chance to talk with admissions staff from the 13 United Methodist schools of theology, attend workshops, and take part in small group discussions.

For more information, or to register for EXPLORATION, please visit www.gbhem.org/exploration or www.explorecalling.org.

By attending EXPLORATION, youth and young adults will have the opportunity to explore a variety of ways to serve in ordained ministry.

*Rev. Meg Lassiat
General Board of Higher
Education and Ministry*

Ministry, which sponsors EXPLORATION.

"In the past three years, we have seen a growth in the numbers and percentage of young adult clergy in the UMC. Last

youth and young adults to consider ordained ministry as a profession," Lassiat said.

The national event is for high school seniors through young adults aged 24 who are

United Methodist scholarships and loans available online

**By Vicki Brown
Associate Editor
General Board of Higher
Education And Ministry**

Students who need financial help for college costs can now apply online for United Methodist scholarships or loans.

"We believe this new system is much more convenient for applicants," said Angella Current-Felder, executive director of the Office of Loans and Scholarships at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The online scholarship application went live January 5. As of March 17, 2009, more than 1,600 applications had been submitted for scholarships for the fall term.

Allyson Collinsworth, scholarships administrator, said applications are coming in much faster online than the paper applications did.

"Historically our office is able to award around 3,000 students each year. We have received half that number of applications only two months into the application season. Last year at this time, we had only received 400 paper applications," Collinsworth said.

For the 2008/2009 academic year, GBHEM awarded \$4.57 million in scholarships to 3,371 students, and \$1.95 million in loans to 430 students.

Loan applications went online in May, 2008 for fall 2008 loans and again in December, 2008 for spring 2009 loans. The response was so overwhelming that the application site was closed within weeks because more applications were received than could be funded.

"Scholarship deadlines vary for the more than 60 programs administered by GBHEM, but the final deadline has always been May 15. We are encouraging applicants

(especially renewal students) to apply and complete the application early this year to insure they are considered for funding," Collinsworth said.

The new system allows the staff to communicate by e-mail about requirements to complete an application. Applicants must submit an official transcript, letters of reference, and essay to the office in one packet to complete the file after the online portion is submitted.



"We can now e-mail applicants on a regular basis to inform them of missing items and award notification," she said.

The time saved by no longer needing to do data entry of applications gives staff more time to analyze the applications.

Applicants have provided positive feedback about the online application versus the paper applications. The applications have church and school wizards that enable the applicant to choose their current school and church from a list.

These databases contain all accredited institutions within the United States, and all known United Methodist churches. That helps L&S staff verify church membership, and will allow the office to communicate more effectively to United Methodist churches and institutions regarding recipients from their local congregations or student body.

In addition to online applications, students can now repay their loans online.

To learn more about United Methodist loans and scholarships, visit www.gbhem.org and click on the Loans and Scholarships button.



Social Media



Should your church have a blog?

By Brant Mills
TAC Web Content Manager

This is the beginning of a series of articles that will cover a variety of tools churches can use to connect online.

You can easily find endless lists extolling the benefits and pitfalls of blogging for individuals, organizations and churches. It ultimately comes down to your ministry's needs as to whether blogging is a good use of your time and abilities.

If properly managed, such tools can be a great benefit to any church or ministry and open new avenues of communication and discussion with your members, donors, and community.

Creative, Helpful and Engaging

The most often cited mantra for today's media is "content is king," but what type of content do you post? That depends entirely on your audience, or the one you hope to engage. Who is the primary reader of your blog? Who are you promoting it to? Are you writing about things that you know about, that fit their needs and interests?

Ask. Regularly polling your audience can give you a good idea of what they find useful and what they expect. Use analytics from your site to track your audience's online habits. Knowing what they are reading and clicking can give you insight into what is most important to them.

Churches are using blogs for a variety of purposes. Pastors are uploading their sermons

with additional notes and links to reference material. They post devotionals or commentary of their own. Some add video and photos. Others link to resources or other sites discussing similar topics or even link to other ministries working on similar initiatives as examples.

Some churches discuss activities that are going on in the community as additional ways to connect – often linking back to their church's primary site or calendar for contact information. Sunday school classes and ministries can use them to discuss lessons in greater depth or to provide information on upcoming series.

Are there specific needs? Are there last minute volunteer opportunities available? The topic and style of the blog should fit the goals of your ministry and intended audience.

Consistency is Key

If you aren't going to regularly update it, then don't start one. Have a plan for regularly posting and stick to it. Publish a general timeline on expected updates in the "about" section of your blog site. Visitors will know when to expect an update, so they know whether they should check back daily or weekly.

Put up several posts before promoting your blog so that when people get to your site it has information to read already. The only thing worse than an out of date site is a page that says it will be updated shortly (coming soon... construction in progress etc.) or has no content at all.

Leave a short note if posting will be delayed beyond when you regularly post and perhaps a quick hint at the next topic. Your audience will appreciate the heads-up.

Allow Comments

The content you choose to publish should benefit the reader and be open to their feedback.

Blogs are a step beyond static websites and many consider a site to be a "blog" only if comments are allowed.

Different systems have various options for comment settings and spam filters, but editing or disallowing them altogether will stifle community growth. Individual posts can be deleted or moderated in cases of spam, harassment, or trolling.

Publishing in this way opens you up to online criticism and you should prepare to address it when it does happen. This isn't always bad, but how it is addressed can kill how your blog and even your church or organization is perceived. Dealing with online criticism will be covered more in depth in a later article.

Promoting Your Blog

What good is writing if you don't have an audience? How will they find you? There are many ways to get people – both in your church and in the community to see your blog.

Add a link to the front page and/or the pastor's page of the church's website. Link back to the church's main site from your blog.

Include the blog address in

other communications your church has – bulletins, video, etc., i.e.: For resources or additional commentary on today's sermon, see the pastor's blog.

Include links to new blog posts in updates on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media.

Cross promotion - include links to your social media accounts from your blog page.

Become active in a blogging community – leave helpful comments and links to relevant resources on sites and blogs from other organizations and groups in your area with similar interests or missions.

There are several Methodist bloggers out there already. Connect with them to see what has worked for them. Ask them questions, they want to help your ministry.

Poll - ask your audience what their favorite blogs and sites are.

Above all else, read. Reading always helps your writing. Read books and blogs. Read as much as possible - both secular and sacred. Read successful blogs and small, recently launched blogs. Read about blogs that failed and why they failed. Examine what you think makes them work or fail and make adjustments based on your findings.

For further reading and additional information links to Methodist Blogs and resources can be found at: <http://www.txcumc.org/bloggin-gresources>.

Blogging Statistics from

www.blogworldexpo.com

- Over 12 million American adults currently maintain a blog.
- More than 147 million Americans use the Internet.
- Over 57 million Americans read blogs.
- 1.7 million American adults list making money as one of the reasons they blog.
- 89% of companies surveyed say they think blogs will be more important in the next five years.
- 9% of internet users say they have created blogs.
- 6% of the entire US adult population has created a blog.
- Technorati is currently tracking over 70 million blogs.
- Over 120 thousand blogs are created every day.
- There are over 1.4 million new blog posts every day.
- 22 of the 100 most popular websites in the world are blogs.
- 37% of blog readers began reading blogs in 2005 or 2006.
- 51% of blog readers shop online.
- Blog readers average 23 hours online each week.

Information from:

<http://www.blogworldexpo.com/General-Information/Important-Statistics.html>



Spotlight on Local Church Ministries

Fellowship Opportunities

Holy Week at St. Paul's United Methodist Church

Holy Week at St. Paul's United Methodist Church begins with the congregation entering the sanctuary in a festive processional, waving palm branches, for all three worship services on Palm/Passion Sunday, April 5.

Throughout Holy Week, the Labyrinth will be in the Activity Center for prayer and meditation, and the Walk through Holy Week will be in the Jones Building's Music Room (J-106). The Walk through Holy Week is a life-size tableau that illustrates the last days of Jesus in Jerusalem in a manner that is appropriate for all ages.

Holy Week will be comprised of the following events: Mid-Day services of Holy Communion will be in the Chapel at 12:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday, April 6 through 9; The Maundy Thursday evening service will be at 7 April 9; A Tenebrae Service for children at 11 a.m. on Good Friday, April 10 as well as a service for adults will be in the Sanctuary at noon.

An Easter Vigil will begin on the Main Street entry front steps at 6 p.m. Saturday, April 11, with "striking the fire." With both historic and symbolic roots in the Jewish Passover, the Easter Vigil is informal and instructional.

For more information, contact Donna Adair at 713-528-0527 or dadair@stpaulshouston.org.

Holy Week at CLUMC April 5 - 11

Palm Sunday, April 5 Regular worship schedule will be followed for Palm Sunday. April 6-10, daily lunch devotionals will be held in the Fellowship Hall.

On April 9, Maundy Thursday service will focus on, the *Upper Room Experience* at 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary (childcare provided upon request). A Tenebrae Service will be held on Good Friday, April 10, 7 p.m.

Saturday, April 11 CLUMC will have an, *Egg-stravaganza*, 10 a.m.-Noon, followed by an Easter Vigil, 11 p.m. Easter Sunday Services, April 12 include a Sunrise Service, 6 a.m., an Easter Morning Breakfast and worship services at 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m. & 11a.m. in the Sanctuary.

Older Adult Ministries Retreat *Renew Body, Mind and Spirit*

The FOAM (Fellowship of Older Adult Ministries) Retreat is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28 through noon, Thursday, April 30, 2009, marks the 60 year anniversary of the event.

The Retreat will be at Camp Allen, the Episcopal Diocese Conference Center just outside of Houston. The cost is \$160 per person double occupancy and \$230 single occupancy.

The guest speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Helen Appelberg. She is an ordained Episcopal priest and a Visiting Scholar at the Sealy Center on Aging, UTMB Galveston. The Bible study leader will be Rev. Lawrence Young, District Superintendent of the South Central District. Rev. Young is an outstanding preacher and teacher. The worship and song leader will be Rev. David Henry from First UMC, Bryan.

Other special events planned include entertainment by the Dignity Memorial Singers, an ice cream social, board games, exercise classes and more. To register, contact Mary Magnusson, 281-361-9298 or dandmmag@cebridge.net

Living Last Supper at First UMC Houston

First UMC Houston, located at 1320 Main Street, Houston, Texas presents, Living Last Supper, Thursday, April 9, 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

The service will include music and monologues by each of the 12 disciples and participation by the Sanctuary choir.

Participants in attendance will share in the Passover table with the disciples.

The event is free to the public. No photos, please. For more information, contact Linda Calvert at 832-668-1816 or lcalvert@fmhouston.com.

Good Friday Service at Terrace UMC

On Friday, April 10, Terrace UMC will offer an opportunity to spend time in prayer, meditation, reflection and walking the Labyrinth from 12:00 - 3:00 pm in our Fellowship Center.

Also, beginning at 10 a.m. and again at 1 p.m., there will be a special presentation of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of Christ" with time for discussion following each showing.

For more information, contact Rev. Cathy Meyenberg Associate Pastor of Adult and Sr. Adult Ministries at 713-686-4328 or cmeyenberg@terraceumc.org.

Learning Opportunities

Griefshare Ministry Offered At Clear Lake UMC

GriefShare, Sunday nights, 6-8 p.m., room 425 at Clear Lake UMC, 16335 El Camino Real, Houston, Texas 77062. GriefShare is a special weekly seminar and support group for people who are grieving the death of someone close to them.

It's a place to be around people who understand what you are feeling.

At GriefShare, you'll learn valuable information about recovering from your grief and renewing your hope for the future. Child care is available for those who need it. For more information contact Linda Bracey at 713-731-0581, or visit our website at www.clearlakemethodist.org.

TAC Preachers' Children Survey

The Texas Conference Committee on Archives and History would like to put together a booklet of experiences from preachers' children and would love to hear from you. Their survey is available online at <http://www.txcumc.org/pksurvey>.

Jones Memorial UMC To Host A Young Adult Retreat

Image, Christian Perfection and The Young Adult is the theme for the April 18 retreat sponsored by the Young Adult Ministry (YAMS).

Keynote speakers will be Dr. Cedric Bridgeforth, District Superintendent of the Los Angeles District; Rev. Olu Brown, Senior Pastor of Impact Church in Atlanta, Georgia; Rev. Jacqui Thomas King, Pastor of Nu Faith Community Church in Houston, Texas and Rev. Joyce James, Pastor of Total Man Christian Center in Houston, Texas.

The event will be held at Jones Memorial UMC, 2504 Alameda Genoa Road, Houston, Texas, starting at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 4:30 p.m. The \$25 fee for the retreat includes breakfast, lunch and snacks.

To register or, for more information, contact Rev. Ricky Georgetown at 832-248-6884 or Ms. Lesley Ayers at 832-722-6652.

First UMC Bullard Offers Marriage Seminar

April 24-25, 2009 is the date for, Improving Communication in your marriage seminar.

The workshop will focus on strengthening your relationship with practical insights. Discover how to gain intimacy in your relationship and overcome the barriers to communication. The cost is \$40 per person (lunch is provided). For more information, contact the church at 903-894-6762.

Outreach and Mission

Prayer Shawl Ministry

The Prayer Shawl Ministry at St. Luke's UMC has made over 250 shawls which have been given to others as tangible expressions of the love and concern of a community of faith. The ministry meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month.

On April 18, St. Luke's and Chapelwood's prayer shawl ministries will meet with others throughout the city for a retreat lead by Janet Bristow and Victoria Cole-Galo, co-founders of the international Prayer Shawl ministry and authors of, *Prayer Shawl Companion*. For more information, visit www.stlukemethodist.org/prayer.

Do you have information about your church or ministry you would like to share with others?

Contact
Thelma Jones at
713-521-9383,
ext. 335 or
thelmaj@methodists.net